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HUMOR WRITER AND COLUMNIST BRUCE CAMERON WILL SHARE WRITING TIPS DURING ERMA BOMBECK WRITERS’ WORKSHOP

DAYTON, Ohio — Judging by the subject of his upcoming book, W. Bruce Cameron may one day be one of the most-read authors of all time. The humor writer said he’s amazed at the anticipation already generated for his text on “how to change a man.”

“Every woman I’ve told about this book is eagerly awaiting publication,” Cameron said from his temporary home in Los Angeles, where he is working on a screenplay for Disney Studios and a television sitcom pilot for ABC. Both are based on Cameron’s first book, 8 Simple Rules for Dating My Teenage Daughter and Other Tips from a Beleaguered Father (Not That Any of Them Work), published in 2001 by Workman Publishing Co.

Cameron will share his simple rules for humor writing during the University of Dayton’s Erma Bombeck Writers’ Workshop Saturday, March 9. He will be one of 20 prominent humor writers, human interest columnists and editors who will pay tribute to the life and work of Erma Bombeck. The daylong event, which sold out more than two months early, has attracted 250 attendees from 28 states and Canada. In a book-signing event that’s free and open to the public, Cameron will sign copies of his books from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. that day in the Torch Lounge in Kennedy Union.

In its first month alone, 8 Simple Rules reached number 14 on the New York Times best seller list and sold out. Not bad for a writer whose readership in 1995 totaled six — “four of whom were related to me or were me,” Cameron said. Those loyal fans, the first to receive Cameron’s bimonthly, Internet-based humor column on life and family, proved the foundation for its current e-mail distribution list of 40,000 readers in 52 countries “if you count Texas as a country,” he said. Column samples can be viewed on his Web site at www.wbrucecameron.com.

His column was picked up by the Rocky Mountain News in 1999, and in 2001 Cameron signed with Creators Syndicate, which distributes the column to about 50 newspapers — “give or take 49,” he added.

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Although his dream of becoming a professional writer began in the fourth-grade, Cameron spent the majority of his post-college career working for General Motors' finance division, first in Michigan and later in Colorado. He left GM in 1993 to pursue entrepreneurship, a move which led to posts with several small firms in the Denver area — "every one of which promptly failed after my arrival," he said. "It finally became clear that my role was to become the Grim Reaper of start-up companies."

Because the role he truly aspired to was that of writer, however, Cameron woke each day at 5:30 a.m. to spend time writing before going to work. In addition to starting the Internet column he completed nine books, none of which were published.

"I wrote the first eight with the intention of having them published," he said. "I finally realized that made them unpublishable, so I wrote the ninth book purely for pleasure. I figured, if I wasn't going to be published, I might as well write about something I enjoy."

Cameron was right — his ninth book also wasn't published, but it was good enough to land him an agent, who helped him sell his column to the Rocky Mountain News. And it was book number 10 — 8 Simple Rules, "a highly exaggerated work of nonfiction" — that got him published.

With publication came the official start of Cameron's professional writing career. A four-month, 20-city book tour included stops for appearances on CNN, CBS' Early Show, Iyanla, The Other Half and a host of local television and radio spots. One of those radio appearances proved the next significant career break for the writer.

"I was interviewed by Oliver North on his radio show. He was an extremely gracious man and very interested in what I was doing," Cameron said. "He put me in touch with Creators, who picked me up in October 2001."

With his family — wife Mary Ellen, daughters Georgia Lee, 20, and Chelsea, 18, and son Chase, 14 — keeping the home fires burning back in Colorado, Cameron is busy working on his screenplay and television pilot. He also just signed with Workman Publishing for his book on men, tentatively — and appropriately — scheduled for release on Mother's Day 2003.

Looking back, Cameron said his move away from the "very sheltering" environment of General Motors took its toll for a while personally and financially. "It was a real leap of faith," he said. "But in retrospect it was a good move. Writing for a living is all I've ever dreamed of, and there is no doubt in my mind that this is where I belong."

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For media interviews, contact Bruce Cameron at bruce@wbrucecameron.com.